



June 25, 2020

P. Srirama Rao, Ph.D.
Vice President for Research and Innovation
Virginia Commonwealth University
800 East Leigh Street, 3rd Floor - Suite 3000
Richmond, Virginia 23219
Via email: vpresearch@vcu.edu

Dear Dr. Rao:

On behalf of the New England Anti-Vivisection Society (NEAVS), including our membership in Virginia, I am writing to relay our concern regarding troubling evidence of ineffectual research and potential animal suffering taking place at Virginia Commonwealth University and to respectfully ask that you consider ending these experiments.

Document We Reviewed

NEAVS reviewed Virginia Commonwealth University's grant application to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute entitled, "High Efficiency Delivery of Surfactant Aerosols to Infants without Intubation" (1R01HL139673-01 REVISED). The Principal Investigator is professor P. Worth Longest. This document was released to us due to a Freedom of Information Act request.

Finding: Induced Ferret Lung Injuries in Particularly Cruel Experiment

In reviewing this record, we were alarmed to discover that Virginia Commonwealth University is forcibly subjecting twenty ferrets to lung lavaging and injury. Researchers are administering aerosol surfactants into ten ferrets' lungs and liquid into another ten ferrets' lungs via the nose-to-lung (N2L) route. The application notes the limited conclusions that may be drawn from the study's findings by stating: "considering that the nasal structure of the ferret is considerably more complex than that of an infant, N2L delivery in a ferret provides a significant challenge and should provide a conservative estimate of lung delivery efficiency in an infant with similar lung size." The application also discusses anticipated difficulty "with balancing sufficient lung injury for evaluating efficacy with survival," meaning that these ferrets are undergoing potentially painful procedures and subsequently losing their lives for tenuous scientific conclusions.

Request: Terminate the Surfactant Aerosol Experiment

While this study may be conducted in compliance with existing Animal Welfare laws and regulations, it proves to be wasteful and cruel. The nasal disparities between human infants and ferrets disparages the potency of any findings this research yields.

Such misuse of time, money, and resources warrants your intervention to immediately end the induced ferret lung injuries and to enact a policy against allowing any similar research protocols in the future.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathan Herschler', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nathan Herschler, Executive Director
New England Anti-Vivisection Society (NEAVS)